Stockbridge
R.C Hauschild

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2025

https://archive.org/details/stockbridge0000alle

STOCKBRIDGE

A POETRY COLLECTION

RICHARD CURTIS HAUSCHILD

FOREWORD

I have always been somewhat defined by the places I have lived. I think I tried to fit my location with who I was or who I thought I should be, but it was only later in life that such a concept became a choice instead of a random event. Growing up around Chicago has made that area my eternal hometown. Going to college in Nebraska gave me a new family of friends and opened my eyes to other cultures at a time of national unrest due to segregation, assassinations, and the Viet Nam War. And then there was that twenty-year stint in Hollywood, California that led me to find and explore my creative instincts. I have been told I have led an interesting life, mostly due to where I laid my head. So why do I now find myself writing about a small Wisconsin town, population 639? The answer is very simple: Stockbridge is where I was always supposed to be. It is where all the other roads led me. I have taken many photographs of this beautiful area, Lake Winnebago, and her sunsets. Now it is time to write something.

FOR

DAN & CATHY KREMZAR

THE QUIET SIDE

I came to live on the Quiet Side
A place to begin my quiet slide
With youth and danger in my past
I decided, I moved, and now at last
I have surrendered to
This Wisconsin small town
On the eastern shore of an inland sea
Not much else in the vacinity
And the town is Stockbridge
Very simple, semi-great
Between the ledge and the lake
53088

REQUIEM FOR A STURGEON

I saw the unlucky monster
Lying still in death in the summer shallows of
Sunset Beach
With gentle waves prodding
As if to nudge it awake to swim away and
As it rolled the wounds were revealed
Inflicted by a motorboat prop
Leaving it scarred for eternity
Or at least until a predator with a degree in
prehistory
Came along and took him unsmoked.
And how do you say a silent prayer
To the symbol of our town?
How does one justify this wreck with the images
On the water tower or banners
That proclaim the "Sturgeon Center of the World"?
He might have gone in glory
Mounted on a wall or at least hung as a trophy
Outside a local late-winter bar
While the fisherman that speared him made him
longer
And heavier with every downed beer.
So, the prayer goes like this:
Continue your swim, ancient one
Back to the bottom of your lake
Back to the age of glaciers
Back to the millennium before spears
Back to before man tasted your eggs
Or smoked your ass behind the barn

Back to the glory days of your realm
Back to the moment before the motor that got you
Was even a noisy idea.
Go back and come again

THE BELLS OF ST MARY

The Seven Dolors, not bingo dollars
The bells toll for her sadness
And I cannot help but hope that at
The hours of 7AM and 5 PM
When the church with the ornate windows
Sends the sound of bells across the fields and ledge
That the sadness is healed
Not only by time, but
By places and people who remember
And greet strangers as if they were neighbors
Who might not share the same life stories
But understand the spiritual glories
Of this lovely place on Highway 55
Where faith is alive
Beside a huge font of Holy Water
Thirty miles long by ten across
Where Mary is a farmer's daughter
And her husband frames barns and houses
And her Son is a fisherman coming home
In his walleye boat when the day is done

THE DEAD OF WINTER

The first snow came in November
It did an off and on in December
And then there was a New Year thaw
That fake-out joke that always works
Because the heart is always longing for spring
As soon as the Christmas tree comes down.
And the lake is always the barometer
So, when reality again meets thermometer
It is as though some vast steel mill
Has worked overtime and poured cooling metal
Into the Winnebago basin
Giving it the surface of Europa
Frozen, barren, lifeless…beautiful!
The low winter sun sets in the southwest
Just above North Fondy
And casts its silver streak across the ice
And into my camera lens and
If this is the dead of winter, then
I am its undertaker and I welcome you in
To the world of severe art
Flawless until the chainsaws cut holes
Big enough for a dinosaur
And the lake face breaks out
Into shanty acne
Enhanced by the latest, greatest snow

HEAT WAVE

This is not a wave, no way
Though it shimmers like a lazy ocean
It is flat and hot and fine and
It drips water from my hairline where
Insects work in the shade and then dine
On hot blood, molten red and black
And I'm waiting for the night breeze
Because I know that it will come back cool
Like the subtlest thrill in the trees
And then I wonder how it would feel
To be in a room at any temperature and to
Sit three feet from an oscillating fan and
Just whisper to you softly about this heat
That has nothing to do with waves
Or agitated mercury
Or summertime

HIGHWAY 55 REVISITED

Main street Stockbridge
No stop lights, no stop signs
And if you blink your eyes
You are either in Sherwood or Quinney
And while Sherwood has a grocery store
And Quinney has a ghostly aura
We have a blacksmith shop, so there!
The first time I found myself on 55
I was charmed by the unexpected glimpse into a time
Lost to wind turbines and factory farms
And those damned round-abouts
No, not here, stop for a beer
Stay for a fish fry
Or, as I chose to do, move in
And listen to the silence
Except around the 4th of July
When the fireworks stand down the road
Sells cacophony to driveway grillers
And garage sitters who are kickin' it
Happy to be alive
Here on the outskirts of Babylon
On Wisconsin Highway 55

DARK RAIN

Out beyond the rain and wind
The calmer spirits sit in heaven's kitchen
Where they play card games
And make up stories while
Sipping hot chocolate too hot to sip
And the dog lays at their feet
While the house cats roam the counters
And an ember pops in the fireplace
Startling them all
Eyebrows raise, smiles spread
As one play trumps another
Cards tossed in the middle
By the sugar bowl and the cream
Hey, my arm is sound asleep
As I wake up from the dream
And I stare up at the ceiling aware
I am not in heaven's kitchen
But, in a warm bed with your calm spirit
And outside it is snowing
And the wind is busy blowing
While love inside is growing
And what is better than knowing
We are alive

THE UNION STREET HERON

I see you lurking trying to be invisible
No eye blink or heartbeat betrays you
You have come to the creek to fish
So, you study my intent, my threat
But, a man with a camera is all you get
You've seen me before and heard me whisper
"Hey, Mr. Blue, I'll keep my distance
If you will just hold still for a moment
And not take flight
I'll post you on Face Book later tonight
And make you star.
Hell, you already are!
A Hollywood heron complete with ego
A snide expression for the press
And no autographs, I guess
So out of respect I'm back in the car
And you watch me as I pull away
I can read your mind and hear you say,
"Call my agent next time. I'm too busy today"
Okay, Big Bird, that is true
You may be great, but you're not all that blue

LOST DOG

I see the posters
And feel the pain
Anywhere you live the family dog is like your kid
Even when they get old
And when you call and when you whistle
And there is no wagging tale
After a certain amount of time
All you can do is say this prayer:
Wherever you have gone I will find you
I promise I won't be too far behind
Then it will be your turn to walk me
Into your endless, sunny yard of play.
I hope to see you as you were
No language, only eyes and a tail
To express how you feel and
I know you won't forget my scent:
I'm the one who smells like love

THE SANDMAN SOLDIER

The Sandman at the end of the bar
Speaks in daylight dreams
As a slide show plays behind his eyes
There was an ore train in the north
That still makes a little noise
Then it's gone away to the stars
Light to light, recycled toys

The Sandman's blue eyes smile
He reaches for an answer
He wonders if the war's to blame
There was a bloody beach and
Some wound he can't remember
And which Omaha was it
Was it June or some November

The Sandman shakes his head
His questions are sincere, but
They return like tracer bullets
Passing over head too fast to hear
He nods and gets another beer
And we wonder where he wanders
With such mysterious love and fear

QUINNEY

Austin and John were not the last of the Mohicans
But, maybe the last to leave New York long ago
And gave their names to a place where
A giant cottonwood dwarfs a red house
And the ghost of a cheese factory
And a lovely road down to the lake
And a few residents who must know
That they live within the navel of the world.
The speed limit slows on the highway as if to
Request you pay attention
Even if you do not stop
Because the spirits of all our history live there
The spirits of our fish-blessed lake live there
The tradition of our dairies lives on there
The hazy smoke of an old calumet lingers there
Time stands still and waits
For an old chief's wife to ring a bell
Outside her one-room school
Midday, midway, mid-galaxy
This wide spot in the road has depth
And the gravity of love

THE LEDGE

As I drive west on CTH F
My car spills over the same rocky cliff
As the waters of Niagara many miles to the east
This escarpment known as The Ledge
Captured my imagination
And I wrote some novels set in its vicinity
But what divinity formed this rocky rampart
To wreath the Great Lakes
And come to my backyard
To form the eastern rim of the Winnebago bathtub
A limestone backbone
Quarried up and down for ornament rocks
And building blocks
That frame the Holyland
And such a wonderful wicked irony
That the Ledge that creates a such romantic waterfall
Rises just above a once infamous motel
Whose spectacular views of Winnebago
Also was the scene of scandal of the sordid kind
I'll keep this tale vague
And keep the stranger's imagination blind
It's a long short story
As it always is
Below the Ledge

LOST and FOUND

See you later, dear
I'm going down to look at the lake.
I see a lot of men in cars go that way
Stop for a moment and turn around and
I am surely one of them today.
What are we looking for and what do we see?
I guess I can only speak for me
But I have always thought of that body of water
As a beautiful moody woman who
Changes her looks to fill an empty place
In the heart of a man who knew her as a boy
Who went away from fishing every day
To see the world beyond the Cheddar Curtain.
But she remained unchanging
Except for her dress colored by the sky
And except for her eyes, flashing in the sun
And except for her hair shining in the moonlight
And except for her smile, bent by the cold
She flirts through her water birds
And dares with her leaping fish
She'll promise you anything
But don't make a wish
Just smell her mouth and blow her a kiss
The boy has been gone for fifty years
But Winnie's still here
See you later, dear

TWELVE SNOWFLAKES ON CHURCH STREET

She took off her glove
And extended her hand
Capturing twelve snowflakes
On her palm among the creases of
The fortune teller's lines
Remembering one was called life
It's channel now filling with water
As warm blood below the skin reduced
The delicate white doilies
Back to their elemental state
Basic chemistry and blessed Nature
Working together in harmony
And then putting her glove back on
She looked around at the billions of flakes
That she did not dream-catch
As they were collecting all around
Waiting for the warm hand of spring
Prettier than water

CRITTERS

The other citizens of Calumet County
Are everywhere if you look
They live on streets named Mill Creek
Killsnake and Shady Lane
They inhabit the wooded suburbs of Kloten
And the marshes of Faro Springs
They are mostly shy and quiet but then
Who could be disturbed by the war whoops
Of a thousand goose skein in October?
Or the beer can trapped in barbed wire call
Of the sand hill crane in springtime?
And I have heard coyotes under a Wisconsin moon
To rival their cousins in the western deserts.
The white tails that feed along the woods at dusk
Are wary, but have grown to trust
The rules of the hunt
And consume the berries that will energize their run
The foxes, opossums, and badgers sneak about
But I worry about the raccoons
And their suicidal tendencies
When it comes to county trunks at midnight.
I have never left the house and not seen the wild ones
Especially the birds
They are everywhere under Heaven
To wake me up and sing me to sleep

WINNEBAGO SUNSETS

If you wish to study art
Come to the lake one half hour before the end of any day
When the sun, the clouds, and water or ice
Combine to be a canvas, a palette, a brush
And watch the Master carefully do his thing
To make the angels sing
While Leonardo and Vincent shake their heads
And attempt to imitate atmosphere gone wild
An insane genius is effortlessly at work
On an infinity of themes
That cue the night, the stars, the dreams
And I don't paint, I photograph
I point and shoot in digital homage
For who could take credit for glimpses of Heaven
Etched in the western sky
My mind is blown in technicolor
Salmon, umber, peach, ox blood
Periwinkle blue, royal purple
Gold, silver, electrum
Mascara, eyeliner, lipstick, blush
And all of it done without a brush
And just when you think the show is over
He blows on the embers with affection
A curtain call for resurrection

STAR-CROSSED
(Under my Window)

Take a moment to think about the truest love
In the universe, the cosmos, and beyond
A love not interrupted by age or
Petty jealousy, or domestic rage
It has an invisible bond from a magic wand
That is never stagnant and dances
To the silent string ensemble of the stars
This love even defies science
A pursuit that insists the heart is only
A blood pump and not a fountain
It puts love in a valley instead of on a mountain
But even Doctor Einstein allowed for a mystery
To flow behind history and walls of proof
Surely Albert must have been a witness
To the long-distance kisses
Of Luna and Datura
Rise in the eastern sky, Thunder Moon
And unfurl your sensors, Moonflower
You are not star-crossed, you are star-bright
And you make your silent love all through the night

STOCKBRIDGE

I suppose I am no longer a stranger
I have lived here long enough
My writing and photography
Have led me to every dead tree
At sunset and sunrise
To capture the beauty of bare branches against blue skies
My style is minimal in most cases
I love the simplicity of rustic places
Was there ever a structure more poetic than a barn
Older than the hills, faded and worn
With ghosts of Holsteins that were milked
Before the Braves left Milwaukee.
Time doesn't mean that much anymore to me
I have come a long way
Seen a bit of the world
Met movie stars and rock stars
Had my name on record labels
Made and spent a lot of money
But, sweet Jesus,
Honey, I'm home

SPECIAL THANKS TO:

Lois and Pete Hau
Marilyn Behnke
Kathy Schumacher
Willie & Mary Hemauer
Glenny Whitcomb
Lynn Kilgore
Ruth Hedberg
Vivian Kiss
Susie Schoen
Bill Krueger
and
Carlos, my bathroom spider

Made in the USA
Lexington, KY
28 July 2019

RIICHARD CURTIS HAUSCHILD IS A NOVELIST, POET, AND SCREENWRITER. HE LIVES IN STOCKBRIDGE, WISCONSIN

STOCKBRIDGE, A POETRY COLLECTION IS RICHARD CURTIS HAUSCHILD'S PERSONAL TRIBUTE TO THE SMALL WISCONSIN TOWN THAT HE ADOPTED AFTER TWENTY YEARS IN THE FILM AND MUSIC BUSINESS OF LOS ANGERLES, CALIFORNIA. THE POEMS ARE ABOUT THE BEAUTY OF THE AREA AND DEDICATED TO THE NEIGHBORS AND FRIENDS HE HAS FOUND THERE.

P9-CXL-405

ISBN 9781080547234

90000

9 781080 547234